Impact of Scaling digital skilling and community digital hubs in refugee Settlements in Uganda.

(a case of NRC's Changamka digital innovation hubs)

December 2025



Organization : *Norwegian Refugee Council*
Geographical Focus: *[Kampala-Urban, Kyangwali, Rhino Camp, Adjumani and Bidibidi-Yumbe]*
Period of Assessment: *[01/01/2025 to 15/12/2025]*

Donors *: NMFA, Microsoft, NORAD, Unicef, Innovation Norway*

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NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

1. Executive Summary

This assessment evaluates the impact of digital skilling initiatives and scaling digital community hubs in refugee settlements. To enable digital inclusion of the youth in refugee settlements, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) invested in community digital hubs, providing the needed digital infrastructure and connectivity to enhance digital skills acceleration through tiered learning pathway—ranging from free foundational courses to professional industry certifications. Through Partnerships with providers of high quality certified professional programs like Microsoft ,Google, Alison and Arizona state University, Participants are provided with Market aligned programs to enhance their chances of transitioning to meaningful employment.
The assessment involved **595 respondents**, including refugees and host community members, a mixed-method approach—surveys and direct observation was used.

Key Findings

- **74%** of trained refugees reported improved digital literacy.
- **41%** used their new skills for income-generating activities (IGAs).
- **63%** reported improved access to information on protection, Education and livelihoods.
- Digital hubs are heavily used (average of 1,200 user sessions per month per hub) but face constraints in connectivity, equipment shortages, and sustainability.
- Women and persons with disabilities benefited from inclusive training, though the zero rated access to the learning platforms.
- **34%** had secondary (S.4) as their highest level of Education , 12% (P.7) ,14% (S.6) ,34% (tertially education)
- **93%** reported owning a smart devices.
- **79%** reported having access to the internet.
- **90%** reported being confident in basic computer application skills.
- **74%** reported improved awareness of cyber threats
- **73%** undertook and completed a professional program online.
- **88%** felt more confident upon completion of their program,
- **36%** reported applying for Jobs using the skills and certifications acquired
- **20%** reported improved incomes resulting from skills gained from the training.
- **98%** believe digital skilling will enhance their future job opportunities.
- Funding gaps associated with providing digital services in remote locations remains a big challenge.

Inclusion of refugee young women (15-24) remains a challenge too due to the gender roles like baby sitting hinder participation of this demographic in the running digital initiatives.

2025 Reach

Location	Male	Female	Total
Arua- Ocea	226	48	274
Adjumani-Nyumanzi	151	61	212
Adjumani-Ayillo	153	104	257
Yumbe -Yoyo	203	18	221
Kyangwali- Maratatu	238	43	281
Kampala-Nsambya	1114	483	1597
Kampala-Kabusu	384	230	614
Kiryandongo (zero-rated remote access)	208	269	477
Total Reach	2677	1256	3933

2025 Impact Summary

Community digital hubs have bridged the digital divide within refugee communities and enhanced livelihoods opportunities through providing access to market aligned skilling pathways, youth employability, supported entrepreneurial activities, improved information access, and contributed to personal empowerment. Digital hubs have proved to be essential safe access points for learning, remote work, peer to peer psychosocial support, digital devices charging services, and e-commerce inclusion.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

As the global economy becomes more digital with new technologies like AI emerging , NRC has equally stepped up its digital inclusion efforts for the displaced persons through coming up with initiatives that aim to bridge the digital divide exacerbated by displacement and low digital infrastructure and connectivity in the refugee settlements in Uganda. For the displaced youth to remain competitive in the job market like their peers elsewhere, they must have access to the skilling opportunities enabling them attain market relevant skills. The establishment of digital hubs in refugee settlements has proved to be a scalable intervention that provides all digital services in a one stop center. NRC has served over 15,000 participants since 2021. The hubs offer a structured, tiered learning pathway which begins with free foundational digital literacy and online safety training hosted on the Changamka platform, serving as an entry point for the most vulnerable. For those ready to advance, the hubs provide facilitated access to high-demand, industry-standard certifications from global leaders such as Google (Data Analytics, IT Support), Microsoft (Cloud Computing, Azure), Cisco (Networking) and CPD from Alison.

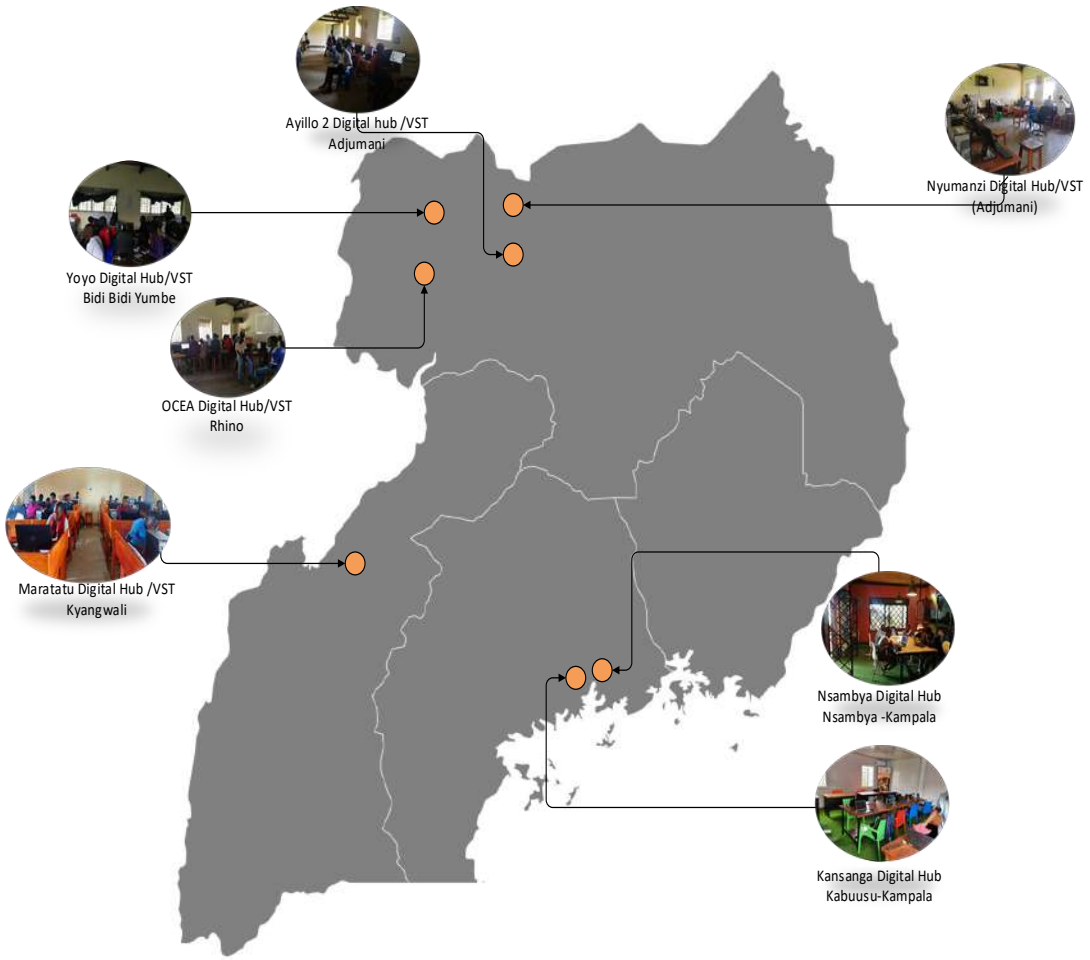
2.2 Purpose of the Assessment

To assess:

1. The effectiveness and relevance of digital skilling initiatives
2. The impact of community digital hubs on refugee wellbeing, digital inclusion, and livelihoods
3. Barriers to access and opportunities for improvement.
4. Access to digital infrastructure and connectivity in refugee settlements

2.3 Scope

The assessment covers impact of digital skilling and community digital hubs in 7 geographical locations.



3.Methodology

3.1 Study Design

A mixed-method approach was adopted:

1. Quantitative surveys (N=595 participants)
2. Direct observations of 7 digital hubs
3. Review of programme data, completion rates, attendance logs, and learning assessments

3.3 Limitations

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- Self-reporting bias associated with online surveys
- Limited historical baseline data



4.0 Findings

4.1 Access and Utilization of Digital Hubs

Digital hubs serve as the main vehicles NRC uses to enable access to digital tools and connectivity, digital services, foster digital skills acceleration, innovation and entrepreneurship and online safety and privacy.

Key Statistics:

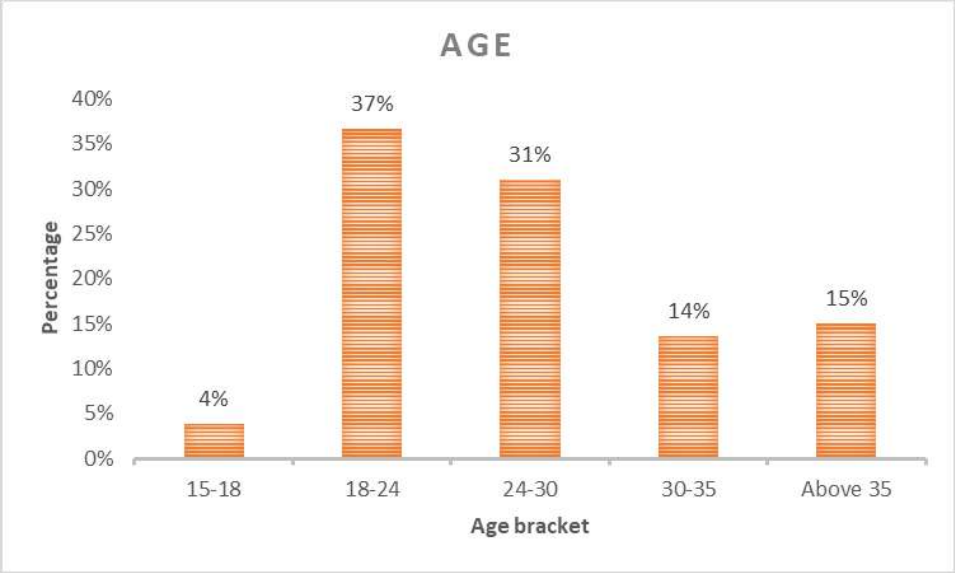
- Average monthly footfall / user sessions per hub: **1,200–1,500 users**
- **82%** accessed hubs at least once per month
- **32-37%** of users were women and girls for Kampala, Kyangwali and Adjumani while it was only **10-15%** for Rhino camp/ Madi-okollo and BidiBidi-Yumbe

3% were persons with disabilities specifically with hearing impairment and physical mobility.

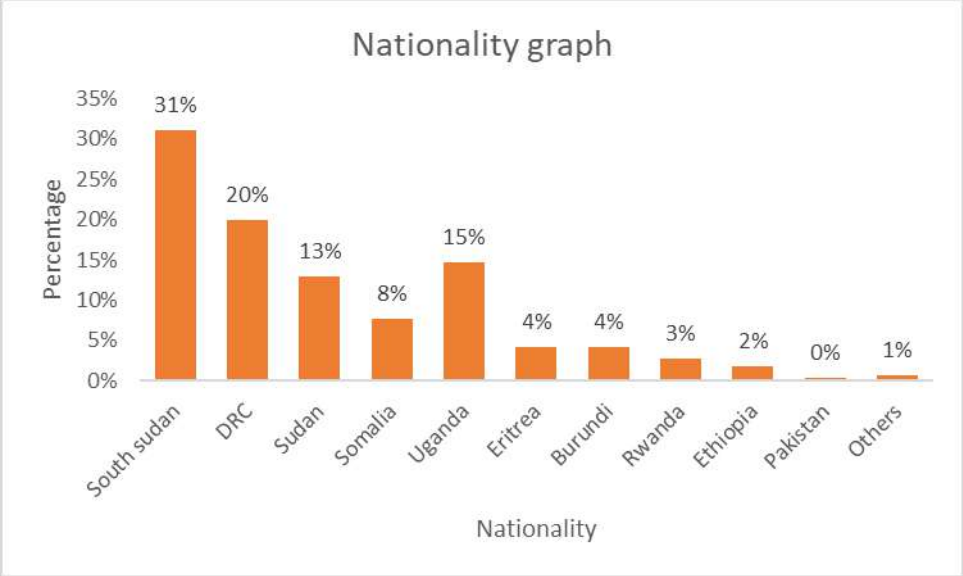
User activity Patterns

Activity	% Users
Online skills training	73%
Job search/online applications	32%
Academic research	33%
e-commerce/digital marketing	10%
Charging digital devices	43%
Protection information access	63%

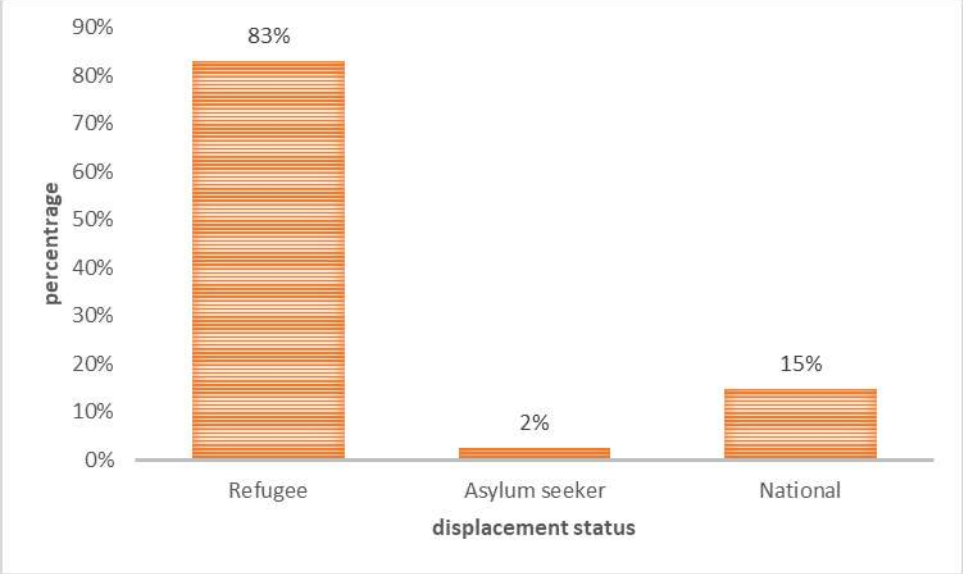
4.2. Age Disaggregation of partici-



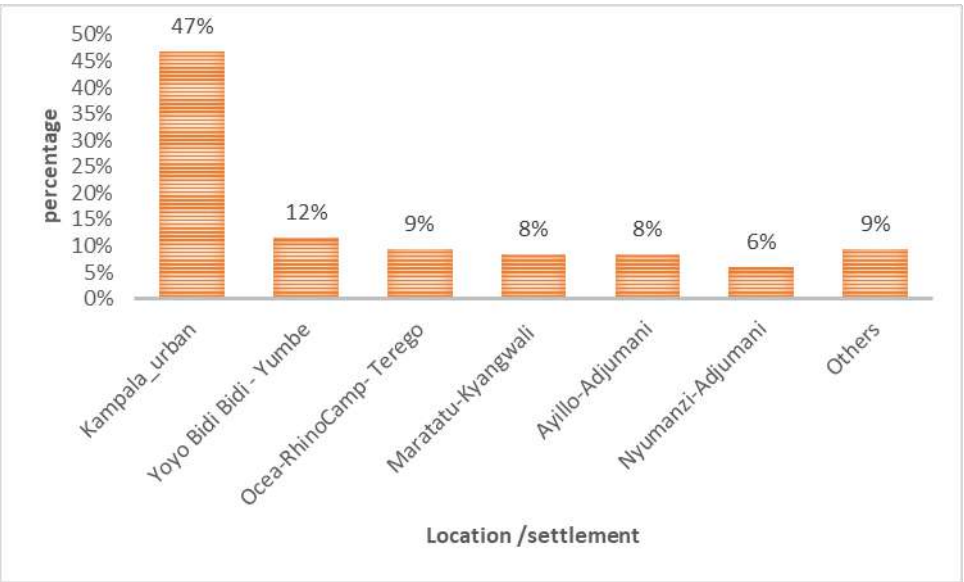
4.3. Participants nationality



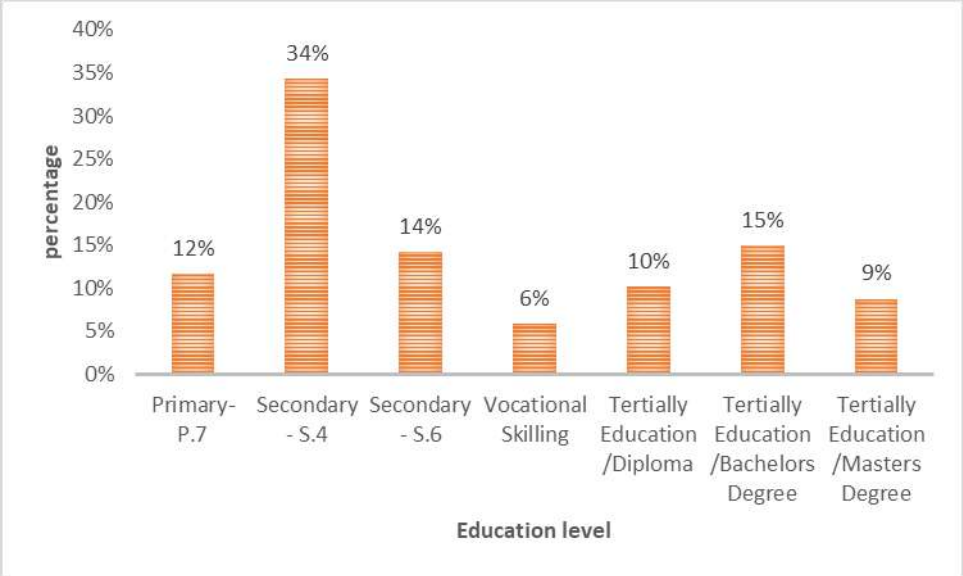
4.4. Displacement Status



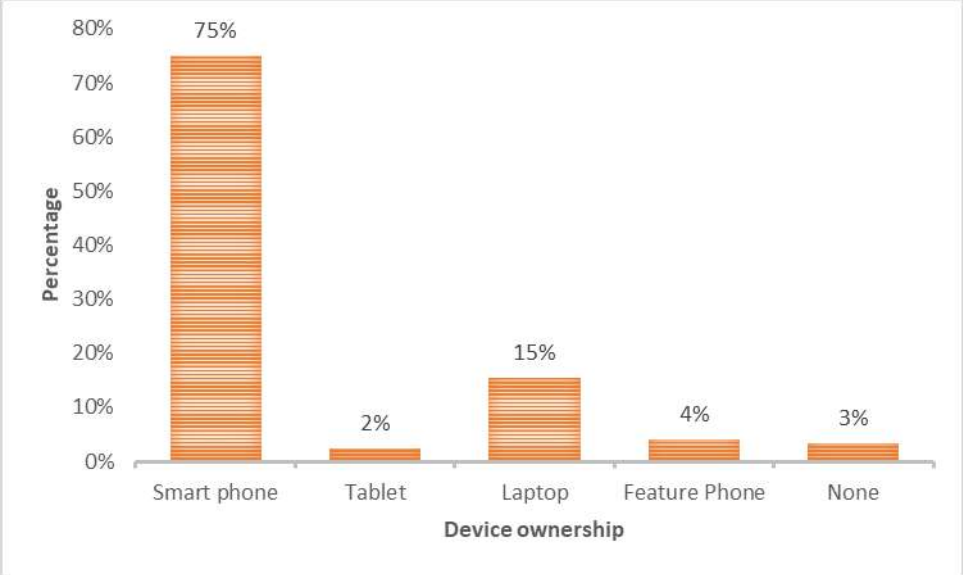
4.5. Participant Location/ settlement



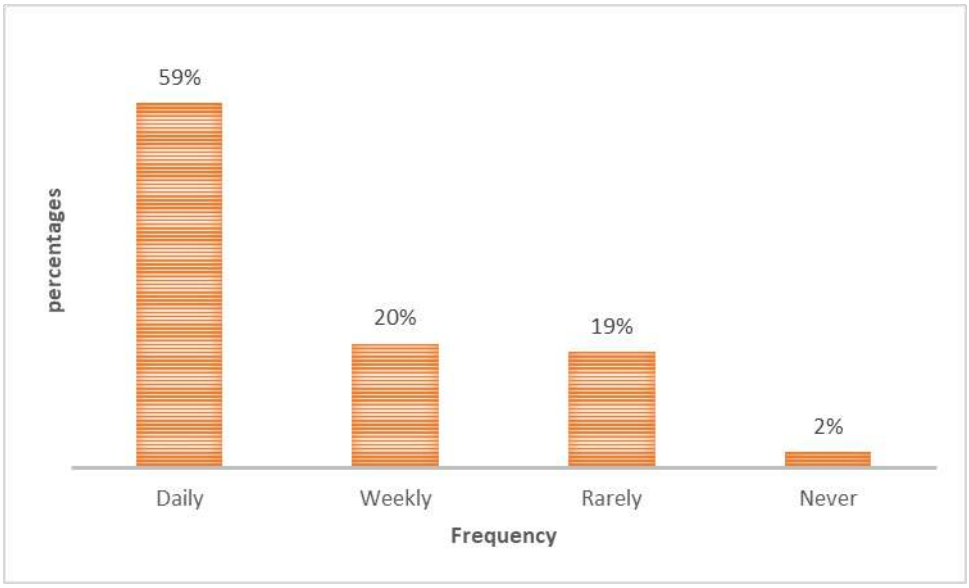
4.6. Highest level of Education completed



4.7. Device ownership



4.8. Internet access frequency



4.9. Digital Literacy Improvement



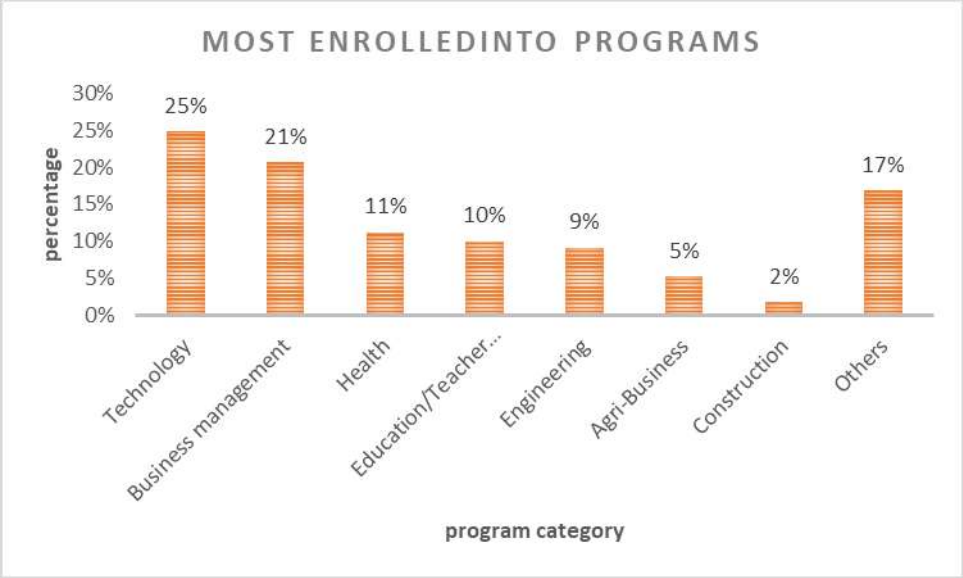
4.10. Ability to Navigate courses and information Online



4.11. Cyber threats awareness



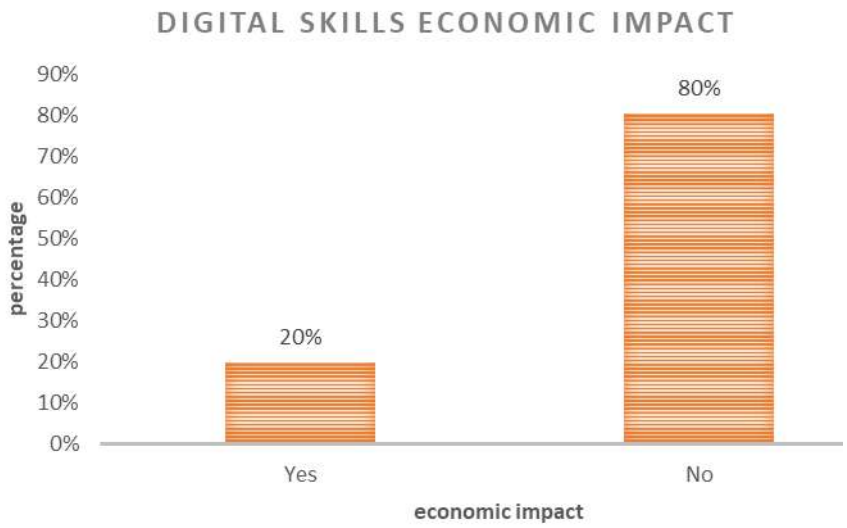
4.12. intermediate /advanced Program enrollment choices



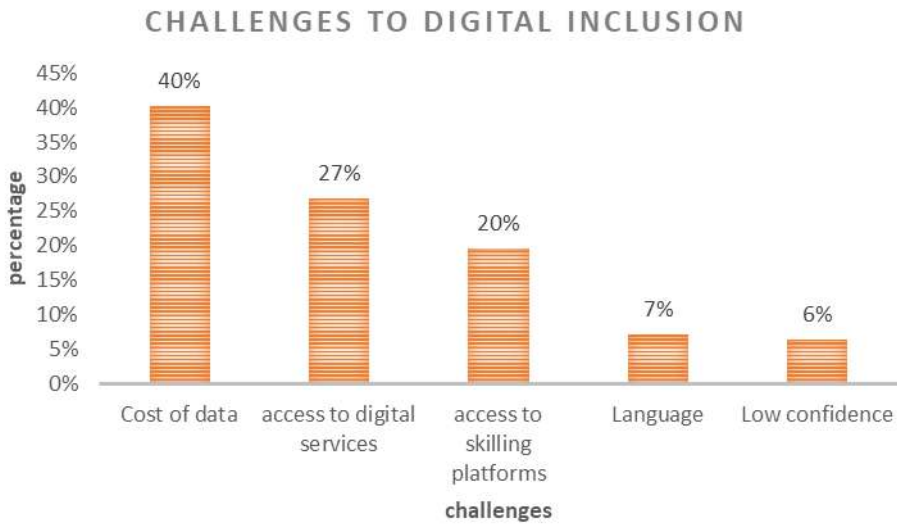
4.13. NRCs Digital skilling program satisfaction levels



4.14. Improved income due to digital skills training.



4.15. Challenges to digital inclusion



4.16. Confidence in digital skills training for future opportunities



5.0 Alignment with NRC Uganda Strategy and Uganda National Priorities

The community digital hubs and digital skilling initiative align with NRC's, Uganda and the RRP strategic priorities by:

- **Enhancing self-reliance and resilience** among refugees and host communities through improved employability and digital competencies.
- **Supporting displaced youth and women** to access dignified work opportunities in line with NRC's Education core competencies and durable solutions approach.
- **Promoting safe and inclusive programming**, ensuring equitable access to digital skills for vulnerable groups, including refugees, young mothers, and persons with disabilities.
- **Strengthening digital inclusion**, which is essential for accessing services, information, learning, and emerging job markets.
- Contributing to NRC's broader strategic goal of supporting displacement-affected populations to achieve sustainable socioeconomic integration.
- Supports the RRP objective of enhancing refugee self-reliance, economic inclusion, and access to livelihood opportunities.
- Contributes to skills development, a priority area under Livelihoods & Resilience.
- Aligns with the Human Capital Development and Digital Transformation programmes under NDP IV.
- Supports the goal of building a digitally skilled workforce, particularly among youth and vulnerable populations.
- Advances national efforts to expand digital literacy, connectivity, and adoption of digital tools.
- Supports the vision of Digital Uganda by improving access to digital skills in underserved communities.
- Directly contributes to the government's objective of modernizing skills training and promoting digital skills for employability.



6.0 Challenges

- Slow or unstable internet connectivity due to the remoteness of refugee settlements.
- Insufficient digital devices vs. high user demand
- Limited funding to support digital operations in remote contexts.
- Limited advanced high quality competitive training programs for intermediate participants
- Cyber threats
- Sustainable inclusion of young mothers in digital programs

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Conclusions

Digital skilling and digital hubs have made a substantial positive impact on refugees' lives, enhancing digital literacy, economic opportunities, protection, and access to essential information. However, challenges in connectivity, sustainability, sustainable inclusion of young mothers and equipment availability hinder full potential. The initiative is highly valued by both refugees and service providers and should be scaled and strengthened.

7.2. Recommendations

7.2.1 Programme Recommendations

- Expanding access to intermediate and advanced market aligned digital skilling programs (AI, digital marketing, data analytics, smart Agriculture , Electric motorcycle and vehicle repairs etc.).
- Increasing the number of devices available in hubs.
- Providing targeted training for women especially young mothers..
- Strengthening online safety and digital protection components.
- Integrate digital skilling with cash interventions programmes (cash-for-business, business incubation etc).

7.2.2 Infrastructure and Operational Recommendations

- Upgrading solar systems and install backup batteries to ensure reliable power and increased access time for participants.
- Improving internet bandwidth through partnerships with telecom providers.

7.2.3 Sustainability Recommendations

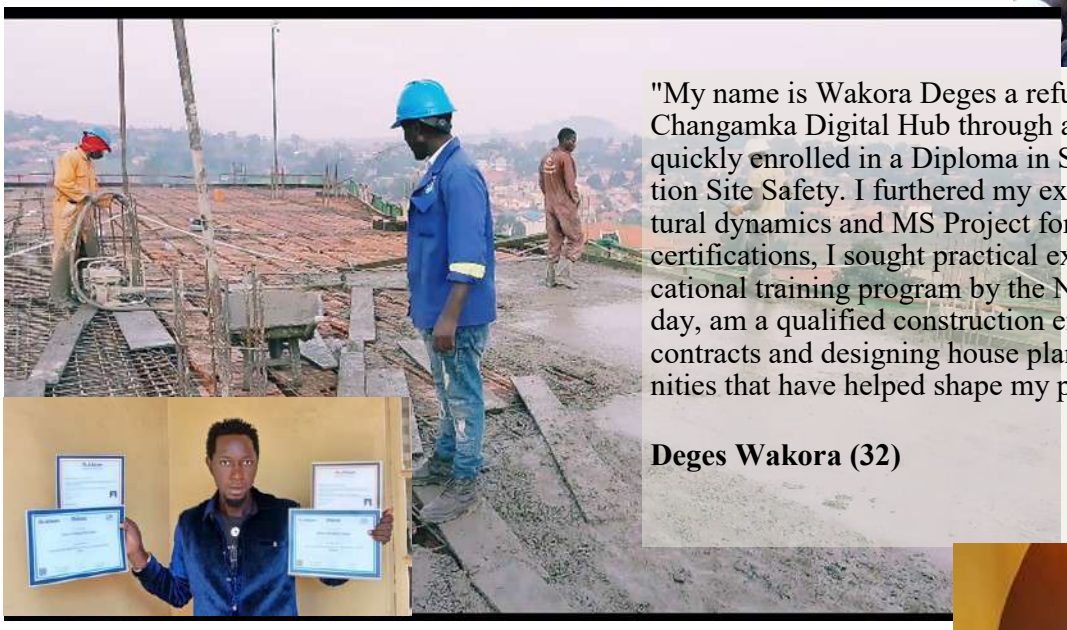
- Establishing public-private partnerships with EdTech firms and ISPs.
- Training refugees as digital hub managers and technicians to reduce staffing costs.
- Creation of community ownership models to run the digital hubs.

Success stories

My name is Mozamil Jamal, a 27-year-old Sudanese refugee now living in Luwero District, Uganda. Formerly an electronic engineer in Sudan, my life changed after relocating in 2023. Through a friend, I discovered the Changamka Digital Innovation Hub, supported by the Norwegian Refugee Council, offered zero-rated mobile access to learning. First I joined to improve my English and communication skills, and it became one of the best decisions I've ever made. I've completed four courses, gained valuable new skills, and can now confidently apply for jobs, support my friends, and contribute to solving community problems. Thanks to this opportunity, my future feels brighter.

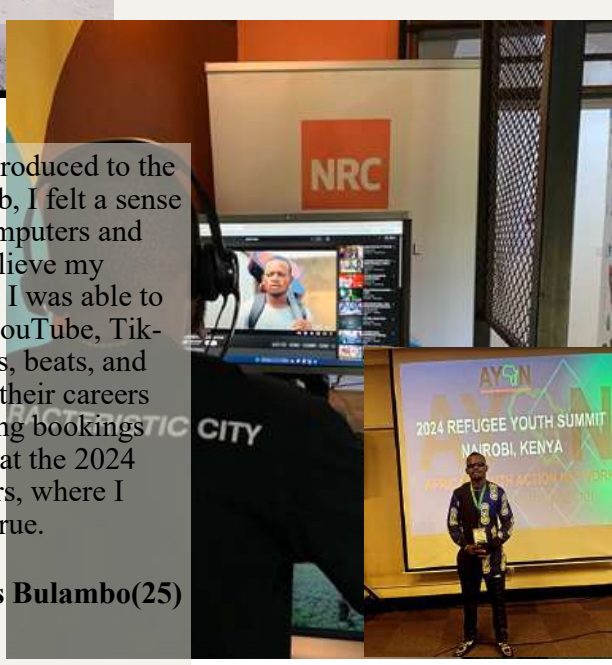
Mozamil Jamal (27)





"My name is Wakora Deges a refugee from Burundi. I discovered the Changamka Digital Hub through a community outreach program and quickly enrolled in a Diploma in Structural Engineering and Construction Site Safety. I furthered my expertise with advanced courses in structural dynamics and MS Project for civil engineering. After earning my certifications, I sought practical experience and successfully joined a vocational training program by the NRC at Buganda Royal Institute. Today, am a qualified construction engineer, taking on short-term building contracts and designing house plans. Am deeply grateful for the opportunities that have helped shape my professional journey."

Deges Wakora (32)



Ever since I was young, I dreamt of becoming a musician. In 2022, I was introduced to the Changamka Digital Hub by a friend. From the moment I stepped into the hub, I felt a sense of hope and excitement. The warm hospitality I received and the sight of computers and internet access filled me with inspiration. It was then that I truly began to believe my dreams could come true. Using the hub's resources (computers and internet) I was able to create and manage my social media accounts on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook. These platforms allowed me to upload my music, videos, beats, and other content. I spent time researching how other musicians were managing their careers online. I was overwhelmed with joy when people started reaching out, making bookings for performances. One of my major highlights was being invited to perform at the 2024 Refugee Youth Summit in Nairobi, Kenya. That opportunity and many others, where I have sung for youth and elderly audiences, are proof that dreams can come true.

Francois Bulambo(25)

"Two years ago, the Norwegian Refugee Council offered me a life-changing opportunity to learn online without data costs. As a Congolese refugee with limited formal education in Uganda, I wasn't fully prepared for the exposure it would bring—but it transformed my life. Through this program, I've built valuable skills, improved my English, and discovered online opportunities, leading me to pursue a career in social media marketing and recruitment. I've also earned a certificate in graphic design and a diploma in human resource management. This opportunity has been a turning point—helping me grow professionally while reducing the cost of learning through free internet access. I'm deeply grateful for the support and stability this program has provided."

Sylvester Baraka (21)

